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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of the educational impact of exhibiting at Wisconsin's county and district fairs is presented. To provide this evaluation, information was collected using mailed questionnaires from 263 Junior-Class and 198 Open-Class exhibitors. Data were obtained concerning social characteristics of exhibitors, exhibiting procedures and attitudes, and changes which might be needed at county and district fairs. Sixty-nine percent of the Junior exhibitors and 54 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors maintained that they had learned "much" or "very much" from their exhibiting experience. It is believed that important needs pertaining to education and social acceptance are met by exhibiting at county and district fairs. (DB)

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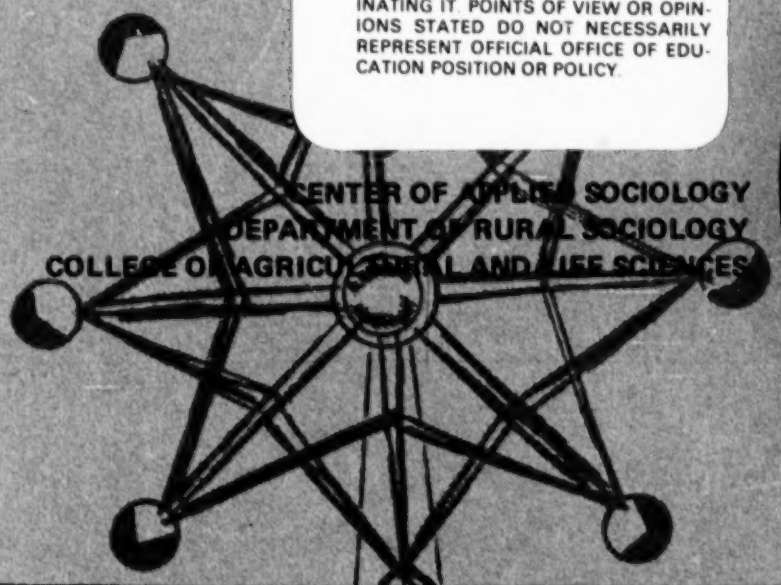

WISCONSIN COUNTY AND DISTRICT FAIR STUDY

Preliminary Report Number 2

PARTICIPATION AND ATTITUDES OF OPEN AND JUNIOR [illegible] EXHIBITORS

BY JOHN R. CHRISTIANSEN, HANS C. GROOT, AND DO[illegible]D E[illegible]

1971

COOPERATIVE [illegible]ENSION PROGRAMS
UNIVE[illegible]Y E[illegible]SION
The Uni[illegible]ity o[illegible]sconsin

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CONTENTS

		page
	Preface	
I	Introduction Objectives of the Study Methodology	1
II	Characteristics of Exhibitors Age Sex Education Place of Residence Occupation	3
III	Exhibiting Experience Number of Fairs at Which Exhibits Were Entered Exhibiting at M re Than One Fair Preferences Regarding Kinds of Exhibitors Number of Exhibits and Exhibitors Hours Spent on Exhibits What Was Exhibited Cash Premiums Won Money Spent at Fairs Future Exhibiting Plans Future Exhibition Plans Without Premiums	6
IV	Educational Value of Fairs Amount Learned at Fairs What Is Learned From Exhibiting Learning at Fairs and School Making Fairs More Educational Judging	10
V	Changes Needed at Fairs Opinions of "Best" and "Worst" in Fairs Being Cheated "Most" and "Least" Important Parts of Fairs	17
VI	Fair Organization and Support State Subsidy for Fairs Giving Fair Boards Greater Authority Eliminating the State Subsidy	
VII	Summary	
VIII	Implications	

PREFACE

The Center of Applied Sociology has accepted the responsibility for evaluating county and district fairs in Wisconsin. This is the second of nine proposed reports being developed by the Center dealing with this evaluation. The evaluation project is being made easier by the excellent cooperation of many individuals and groups who are deeply concerned about the future of fairs in the state. Among these are the following whom we gratefully recognize and thank:

University Extension and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin, co-sponsors of the study; the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Local Affairs and Development, State of Wisconsin, who have legal authority for the supervision and coordination of fairs; the Wisconsin Association of Fairs and its president, W. A. Uthmeier; the Wisconsin Exposition Center, Vernon G. Wendland, Administrator, and Leslie C. Hayden, Supervisor of County and District Fairs. Most importantly, the hundreds of Wisconsin citizens who have responded in such splendid fashion to requests for vitally needed information.

The leader of this project is Dr. John R. Christiansen, Visiting Professor of Sociology from Brigham Young University, assisted by Dr. Hans C. Groot, Department of Agricultural Journalism, and Mrs. Lorna Miller, specialist with the Center of Applied Sociology.

Donald E. Johnson, Director
Center of Applied Sociology
April, 1971

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the number of persons attending county and district fairs in Wisconsin has been equal to about half of the state's total population.[1] In 1970, for example, an estimated 2,885,721 people attended Wisconsin's county and district fairs--a number equivalent to 65% of the state's 1970 population. Data from other studies, and preliminary data from the present study, indicate that the fairs meet many needs of participants. These include social, recreational, economic and educational needs.

The extent to which Wisconsin's county and district fairs meet educational needs of its citizens is a major focus of the overall study, and is of particular concern in this report. As shown in an earlier report, most states, including Wisconsin, have provided financial aid to county and district fairs for more than 100 years.[2] Justification for such usage of public monies has generally involved the educative role which fairs are thought to perform. It is believed that the public has learned of desirable techniques and innovations by attending such fairs, and that exhibitors themselves benefit by developing their exhibits and showing them in a competitive atmosphere. Thus, state subsidies for premiums (prizes) to exhibitors has been the most common form of state aid.

Objectives of the Study

The basic objective of the study reported herein was to evaluate the educational impact of exhibiting at county and district fairs. To adequately achieve the basic objective, the study had three subobjectives. The first of these was to provide a description of the people who exhibited at county and district fairs. The second subobjective was to

determine what was involved in preparing an exhibit, and how much exhibitors considered they learned from exhibiting. Third, the study was designed to reveal what exhibitors considered might be done to improve fairs and make exhibiting a more valuable experience for them.

Methodology

The geographical area selected for this study of Junior and Open-Class exhibitors at county and district fairs was the entire state of Wisconsin. Mailed questionnaires were sent to random samples of persons who had exhibited at the 76 state-aided Wisconsin county and district fairs in 1970. These samples were selected randomly from lists of all exhibitors at these state-aided fairs. At least one Junior-Class and one Open-Class exhibitor was selected from each of the 76 state-aided fairs.

Questionnaires which had been thoroughly pretested were sent to 275 Junior-Class exhibitors. Of this number, 274 (99%) were returned, and 263 were found to be usable. There were 224 Open-Class exhibitors who were mailed questionnaires. Of this number, 214 (96%) were returned, and 198 were found to be usable.[3] The information contained on these questionnaires was edited, coded, punched into machine cards, and analyzed using the UNIVAC 1108 computer of the University of Wisconsin Computer Center.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXHIBITORS

A description of the social and economic characteristics of Junior and Open-Class exhibitors can be useful in many ways. First, it will likely show what kind of people are actually receiving the premium money provided by the state. Second, knowing more about

exhibitors may assist those who sponsor organizations such as 4-H Clubs to develop programs which are more suitable and attractive to their members. Third, it may permit those involved in managing fairs to design their fairs to meet the needs of the clientele more adequately. Finally, it should help commercial and public organizations alike to know more about the kinds of contacts they might make at county and district fairs.

Age

The average (median) age of Junior-Class exhibitors is 13 years. Nearly 75 percent of them are between 10 and 15 years of age. The average Open-Class exhibitor is 38 years of age. However, nearly one-third of the Open-Class exhibitors are under 30 years of age, and almost two-thirds (61%) of them are under 45 years of age. The typical Open-Class exhibitor is a relatively young adult.

Sex

Because of higher enrollments of girls in 4-H Club work, it was expected that there would be more female than male exhibitors in the Junior-Classes. The expectation was confirmed by the finding that about three of every five (64%) Junior Class exhibitors are girls. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of the Open-Class exhibitors are females, with about one-fourth (27%) being males.

Education

The typical Junior-Class exhibitor had just completed the seventh grade when he exhibited at a fair. Relatively few (5%) of the Junior-Class exhibitors had finished high school. On the contrary, more than half of them (53%) were in grades 4 to 7.

Open-Class exhibitors were about equally divided between those who had and those who had not completed high school. The average years of school completed by these exhibitors was 12.4, which is relatively high for the State. In 1960, the average number of years of school completed by residents of Wisconsin was 10.4 years.[4]

Place of Residence

In the 1840's and 1850's when county fairs were first beginning to grow in numbers throughout the United States, about five of every six persons lived in rural areas.[5] These fairs, sponsored mostly by agricultural societies, were oriented primarily toward rural people. It is obvious that exhibiting at county and district fairs still has a strong appeal for rural people in Wisconsin. With only 34% of the state's population living in rural areas in 1970, 80% of the 1970 Junior-Class exhibitors, and 79% of the Open-Class exhibitors lived in rural areas.[6] On the other hand, about 5% of the Junior-Class exhibitors, and 4% of the Open-Class exhibitors lived in large cities (25,000 or more in population). The remaining exhibitors lived in small cities (less than 25,000 in population).

Occupation

Without exception, those filling out questionnaires as Junior-Class exhibitors in 1970 were students. A considerable variation in occupations was observed among Open-Class exhibitors, however. More of them (44%) were housewives than any other occupation, with student (23%) and farmer (14%) occurring next most frequently.

As can be seen in Table 1, the occupation of the chief income earner in the families of exhibitors did not vary much between Junior

Table 1.--Occupation of Family's Chief Income Earner, Junior-Class and Wisconsin Open-Class Exhibitors at County and District Fairs, 1970.

Occupation of chief income earner in family	Type of exhibitor			
	Junior-Class		Open-Class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Student	12	5	16	8
Professional	36	14	26	13
Proprietor	14	5	8	4
Farmer	100	38	75	38
Salesman	6	2	5	3
Blue-collar	83	31	46	23
White-collar	10	4	5	3
Retired	2	1	17	8
TOTAL	263	100%	198	100%

and Open-Class exhibitors. The primary difference was with respect to "blue-collar" occupations where a higher percentage (31%) of Junior-Class exhibitors came from families headed by a "blue-collar" worker. For both groups of exhibitors, farming and "blue-collar" occupations were those most frequently mentioned in the questionnaires by 1970 exhibitors.

It can be seen from this analysis of the occupations of the exhibitors themselves, and of the chief income-earner in the families from which the exhibitors come that strong rural ties exist for many exhibitors. In the case of the Junior-Class exhibitors, the chief income earner was usually the father. In fact, in over 95 percent of the homes of Junior-Class exhibitors, the father was living in the home. Throughout the nation this percentage is under 90.[7]

EXHIBITING EXPERIENCE

Number of Fairs at Which Exhibits Were Entered

Most Junior and Open-Class exhibitors entered exhibits at one fair only. When exhibiting was done at more than one fair, however, it was most often done by Open-Class exhibitors. Nearly 91 percent of the Junior-Class exhibitors were involved in exhibiting at one fair only, as compared with 80 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors. Less than one percent of the Junior exhibitors had exhibited at as many as three fairs. However, seven percent of the Open-Class exhibitors had entered at three or more fairs.

Exhibiting at More Than One Fair

Some reservations about the advisability of permitting persons to enter exhibits at more than one fair have been heard among those associated with fairs. The principal argument for this view is that

unfair competition for local people results if "outsiders" and "professional exhibitors" enter competition. The opposite view is taken by many others, who argue that premiums are not so high as to attract "professional exhibitors" and that stiff competition is a stimulus to top-quality exhibits. It must be noted, however, that in some classes, e.g. dairy and beef, premiums may be high enough to attract professional exhibitors and regardless of premiums they may want to exhibit at many fairs for advertising reasons alone.

The latter view was shared by most exhibitors studied. In fact, 85 percent of the Junior-Class exhibitors maintained that persons should be permitted to exhibit at more than one fair--a view shared by 63 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors as well.

Preferences Regarding Kinds of Exhibitors

As mentioned in the first of these preliminary reports, some people connected with county and district fairs maintain that only youths should be permitted to exhibit. They argue that the educational impact on adults is negligible, and that all the resources available should be concentrated on youths.

Despite this view, however, 74 percent of the Junior-Class exhibitors preferred to have both Open and Junior-Class competition. On the other hand, 25 percent of the youths wanted Junior-Class competition only, and one percent was undecided.

As might be expected, nearly all (95%) of the Open-Class respondents wanted both classes of exhibits. Four percent wanted Open-Class only, and one percent wanted Junior-Class exhibits only.

Number of Exhibits and Exhibitors

Open-Class exhibitors entered more exhibits than did Junior-Class exhibitors. For our samples, the average number of exhibits entered by Junior-Class exhibitors at each fair was about four; whereas each Open-Class exhibitor entered about eight exhibits. Entering a number of exhibits increases the amount of premiums received, assuming the standards of quality are uniform as well as the work and time required.

Overall in 1970, there were 63,068 Junior-Class exhibitors who entered a total of 279,818 exhibits, for an average of about four exhibits per exhibitor; and 9,152 Open-Class exhibitors who entered 102,701 exhibits for an average of about 11 exhibits per exhibitor.[8]

Hours Spent on Exhibits

Despite the fact that each Open-Class exhibitor generally entered more than twice as many exhibits as each Junior-Class exhibitor, the amount of time spent in preparing these exhibits was not much greater. Junior-Class exhibitors spent an average of 38 hours preparing their exhibits; whereas their Open-Class counterparts spent an average of 44 hours. It should be noted, however, that 24 percent of the Junior exhibitors and 33 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors spent more than 100 hours working on their exhibits. Because Junior-Class exhibitors have fewer exhibits, the average time spent per exhibit is approximately twice that spent by Open-Class exhibitors. For both groups, the expenditure of time represents a considerable investment in view of the amount of the cash premiums won by exhibitors.

What Was Exhibited

Most exhibits of both Junior and Open-Class exhibitors were closely related to farming and homemaking. The four categories in our survey which contained the greatest number of Junior-Class exhibits were: livestock, sewing and knitting, handicrafts, and fine arts in that order. For Open-Class exhibitors, the order was somewhat different: plants, sewing and knitting, livestock, and foods.

Considering total premiums paid at state-aided district and county fairs in Wisconsin, it is instructive to note that the four departments in which the greatest amounts of premiums were paid to Junior exhibitors in 1970 were: Dairy Cattle ($77,318), Clothing ($39,508), Foods and Nutrition ($24,975), and Vegetables and Fruit ($20,893). For the Open-Class, the four departments receiving the most premium monies were: Dairy Cattle ($44,593), Sheep and Goats ($13,212), Flowers and Plants ($10,992), and Swine ($10,605).[9]

Cash Premiums Won

Exhibit premiums in 1970 totaled $497,908--$347,392 (70%) for the Junior-Class and $150,516 (30%) for the Open-Class.

Averages computed on a per-exhibitor basis show a considerable difference between the two classes. Junior-Class exhibitors, on the average, received $5.51 compared to $16.45 for Open-Class exhibitors. These differences, however, are almost completely erased when averages are computed on a per-exhibit basis--Junior-Class exhibits, on the average, were awarded $1.24 and Open-Class exhibits $1.47.[10]

Based on the present survey, relatively few Junior-Class as compared to Open-Class exhibitors won any sizable amounts of money from their exhibits. Less than 30 percent of the Junior exhibitors won as

much as $10 or more for their efforts, whereas about one-half (51%) of the Open-Class exhibitors won $10 or more, and 7 percent of them won $100 or more.

Money Spent at Fairs

Generally, exhibitors in both classes spent more money at fairs than they earned in premiums. During 1970 the younger exhibitors spent an average of $9.20 at county and district fairs. That is, they spent about $3.00 more than they won in premiums. Open-Class exhibitors spent an average of $14.43 at county and district fairs in 1970, or about $4.00 more than they won in premiums.

It should also be noted that costs associated with exhibiting can be high. A typical response of a livestock exhibitor was, "We made part of our expenses. It cost us about $60 per fair for trucking, plus another $70 or more each fair for living expenses."

Future Exhibiting Plans

Most of the exhibitors who entered exhibits at county and district fairs in 1970 plan to exhibit again in 1971. Of the Junior-Class exhibitors, 87 percent indicated they planned to exhibit in 1971, and an even higher percentage (95%) of the Open-Class exhibitors so indicated. Thus, there seems to be a considerable carry over of exhibitors from year to year.

Future Exhibition Plans Without Premiums

Because one purpose of the study was to determine the impact of paying premiums on fairs, respondents who indicated they planned to exhibit in 1971 were asked a further question. This question asked

whether they would still exhibit if cash premiums were eliminated and only ribbons given.

Considerably more affirmative answers were given by Junior-Class than Open-Class exhibitors, suggesting that the premiums are more important to Open-Class exhibitors than they are to the Junior exhibitors. Of the Junior-Class exhibitors, 69 percent indicated they would still exhibit in 1971 if only ribbons were awarded. However, only 50 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors shared that opinion. It seems quite obvious that monetary reward, even though small when viewed in terms of the labor and cost of preparing exhibits, influences participation markedly.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF FAIRS

Amount Learned at Fairs

Respondents were asked to evaluate their experiences at county and district fairs in 1970 and tell how much they had learned from exhibiting. As can be seen in Table 2, about 70 percent of the Junior-Class exhibitors, and 54 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors responded that they had learned "very much" or "much" at the fairs. On the other hand, five percent of the former and ten percent of the latter indicated they had learned "little" or "nothing."

The opinions of Open-Class exhibitors concerning the amount youths learned by exhibiting at fairs suggests that they believed youths learned more than the youths themselves believed they did. Four out of five (80%) of the older exhibitors believed youths learned "very much" or "much" from exhibiting. As mentioned above, only 69 percent of the youths felt the same way about their own

Table 2.--Distribution of Junior-Class and Open-Class Exhibitors According to Their Responses Regarding the Amount Learned by Participating in County and District Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

Amount learned	Type of exhibitor					
	What Junior-Class exhibitors said they learned		What Open-Class exhibitors think youths learn		What Open-Class exhibitors said they learned	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very much	90	34	97	49	56	28
Much	93	35	61	31	51	26
Some	65	25	31	16	70	35
Little	6	2	4	2	16	8
Nothing	8	3	0	0	3	2
No answer	1	1	5	2	2	1
TOTAL	263	100%	198	100%	198	100%

learning experiences. None of the Open-Class exhibitors felt that youths learned "nothing" from exhibiting, and only two percent felt youths learned "little."

What Is Learned from Exhibiting

Responding to a question concerning what they had gained through exhibiting, more Open-Class exhibitors responded with answers categorized as "self confidence and esteem" (21%) than any other. This category was followed by "sportsmanship" (18%), "specific skills" (16%) and "evaluation and judging abilities" (16%), as those next most frequently given.

Junior-Class exhibitors were asked to tell what they had gained from exhibiting at fairs, and Open-Class exhibitors were likewise asked what they felt youths gained from exhibiting. The responses are categorized and tabulated as shown in Table 3. Youths responded primarily in terms of things they had learned directly from their exhibiting experience, such as "specific skills, judging and evaluation," and "exhibit preparation," in that order. Open-Class exhibitors, on the other hand, felt youths had learned more about "sportsmanship" and "responsibility."

Learning at Fairs and School

Responses like "much" and "very much" usually lack significant meaning unless compared with more precise evaluations. For this reason Junior-Class respondents were asked to equate the amount they had learned by exhibiting at fairs with days spent in school. Although some youths found themselves unable to make such a comparison, most were able to do so.

Table 3.--Distribution of Junior and Open-Class Exhibitors' Responses Regarding What Junior Exhibitors Learn from Exhibiting, Wisconsin 1970.

What is learned	Type of Exhibitor			
	Junior-Class		Open-Class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Sportsmanship	20	8	75	38
Exhibit preparation	26	10	10	5
Showmanship	20	8	7	3
Responsibility	17	6	33	17
Specific skills	114	43	20	10
Judging and evaluation	37	14	24	12
Social skills	11	4	17	8
Some other answer	16	6	9	5
Nothing	2	1	3	2
TOTAL	263	100%	198	100%

Open-Class exhibitors were likewise asked to give an assessment regarding the days of school required to equal the educational benefits to youths resulting from exhibiting. As shown in Table 4, these estimates ranged from "0" to "30 or more days." Junior exhibitors' opinions averaged 7.4 days, or about a week and a half of school; whereas the older exhibitors' estimates averaged 14.5 days, or about three weeks of school. These results are consistent with those reported in Table 2 in that Open-Class exhibitors again felt that youths learn more from exhibiting than the youths themselves felt they had learned. All in all, the educational benefits gained from exhibiting at fairs compares extremely favorably with the educational benefits gained by attending school.

Making Fairs More Educational

Open-Class exhibitors were asked how fairs might be made more educational. Slightly more than half of them (52%) responded that they did not know how fairs could be made more educational. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents felt the educational thrust of fairs could be improved, and they gave specific suggestions for doing it. Nearly one-fourth (24%) of all respondents felt that the fairs' programs needed changing, and that the young people needed to be vitally involved in making these changes.

Two responses illustrating this point are given below:

> "A fair, like anything else must change with the times. Fair administrators must plan a fair to reflect the needs of today's youth, whose needs are different than our grandfathers."

> "A grandstand show should include the showing of the best cattle in the area, other livestock, perhaps a baseball game between two leading area teams. The grandstand is there and should be used for programs beginning early in the morning and going until late at night."

Table 4.--Distribution of Junior-Class and Open-Class Exhibitors' Responses Concerning the Number of School Days That Are Equal to the Educational Experience in Exhibiting, Wisconsin 1970.

Days of school equivalent to exhibiting	Type of Exhibitor			
	Junior-Class		Open-Class	
	No.	%	No.	%
None	16	6	18	9
1-4	81	31	16	8
5-9	53	20	32	16
10-19	49	19	38	19
20-29	23	9	15	8
30 or more	34	13	52	26
No comparison possible, or some other response	7	2	27	14
TOTAL	263	100%	198	100%

Judging

Few topics bring out exhibitors' opinions so readily as does that of judging. So much of their efforts, aspirations, and egos are so closely tied to judges' decisions that those decisions, and the way they are made, is of great concern to them. Nevertheless, a large majority in both classes were pleased with the judging that took place at Wisconsin's county and district fairs in 1970. (See Table 5.) Identical percentages of Junior and Open-Class exhibitors responded that they were pleased with the judging--80 percent. Among Junior exhibitors, 19 percent were not pleased, and one percent of them undecided. Corresponding responses among Open-Class exhibitors were 17 percent and three percent, respectively. The four most frequently mentioned problems with judging given by Junior-Class exhibitors were, in order of their frequency: (1) apparent unfairness of judges, (2) disagreement with criteria for judging, (3) disappointment with results, and (4) lack of explanation of judgments.

Open-Class exhibitors who noted problems with judging cited the following, in order of frequency: (1) apparent unfairness, (2) lack of knowledge and training on the part of judges, (3) disagreement with criteria, and (4) hastiness of judges in judging certain types of entries.

> "Some of the judges didn't read what they were supposed to be judging. The rules required 1 to 3 blooms in flower exhibits and exhibits with many more were given blue ribbons. Book asked for 3 inch cucumbers - 2.5 inch ones won a blue ribbon and I could go on and on."

> "Need more judges. One judge can't possibly judge 100 items fairly in a single day especially in the cooking project."

> "How can one judge be an expert in all--woodworking, sewing, knitting--baking, art, vegetables, jams, pickles--etc.,?

Table 5.--Junior and Open-Class Exhibitors' Evaluation of Judging at County and District Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

Are you pleased with the quality of judging?	Type of Exhibitor			
	Junior-Class		Open-Class	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	210	80	159	80
No	50	19	34	17
Undecided	3	1	5	3
If no, what was wrong with judging?				
Poor organization	0	0	2	1
No explanation for loss of points	6	2	2	1
Disappointed with results	11	4	2	1
Apparent unfairness	13	5	7	4
Disagree with judging criteria	12	5	6	3
Insufficient attention given to some categories	2	1	5	3
Should be judged by peers	1	1	0	0
Disqualified for incorrect forms	1	1	1	1
Judge lacked knowledge, training	0	0	9	4
TOTAL	46	19	34	18

Under the system of judging used at Wisconsin's county and district fairs, judges are expected to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each entry, thus enhancing the educational aspects of exhibiting. However, only slightly more than half (58%) of Junior-Class exhibitors felt that exhibitors should be required to be present when judging is done. Slightly less than half (45%) of the Open-Class exhibitors had a similar opinion.

CHANGES NEEDED AT FAIRS

Any social institution must change if it is to continue to meet the needs of the people involved in it. Otherwise, it will be abandoned for another institution which will meet those needs better. Constructive change requires at least three elements: (1) open-mindedness on the part of people to recognize the need for change, (2) a systematic appraisal of those aspects of the system which need changing so that needed changes may be recognized, and (3) an orderly procedure for instituting the needed changes.

One purpose of the present study is to determine what aspects of county and district fairs need changing most. Thus, questions designed to reveal both positive and negative aspects of these fairs' operations were asked, not with the intent of fault-finding, but rather to provide the information necessary for vital decision making concerning these fairs. One such decision involves the question: "Are these fairs sufficiently important to the State of Wisconsin and its people to warrant further expenditures of public money?" If that question can be answered affirmatively, then another question seems to properly follow: "What changes should be made in these fairs to make them most productive and valuable to the people of the State?"

Opinions of "Best" and "Worst" in Fairs

The Junior-Class exhibitors were asked to indicate their opinions about the "best," and also the "worst" aspects of county and district fairs. Given below is a distribution of responses to the question: "What was the best thing about the county and district fairs you attended in 1970?"

"Best" Thing	Percent (N = 263)
Exhibiting experience	21
Seeing other exhibits	20
Rides and entertainment	13
Social contacts	12
Recognition from exhibiting	9
Grandstand and other shows	8
Some other answer	8
Contests (e.g. tractor pull, horses)	3
Nothing	6
	100%

It is obvious that experiences connected with exhibiting were thought of as the "best" thing about the fairs. Responses on the first two items listed, and the fifth--all directly connected with exhibiting--together were equal to half of all responses. These results are consistent with the finding that youths felt they had gained most from their fair participation in terms of activities directly related to their exhibiting experience (Table 3).

Youths' opinions of the "worst" things about the fairs were also obtained. Given below are the categories into which their responses fell, together with the percentage distribution showing the

frequency with which responses were given in each category.

"Worst" thing	Percent (N = 263)
Nothing	33
Midway, grandstand, and shows	13
Prices (too expensive)	10
Judging results	8
Weather	7
Inadequate facilities	5
Setting up and taking down exhibits	5
Uncleanliness	4
Some other response	15
	100%

While it is quite apparent that Junior-Class exhibitors were able to see more "good" things about fairs than "bad," sufficient unanimity was expressed about undesirable aspects of fairs to warrant changes being made.

Open-Class exhibitors, when asked about aspects of the fairs that are harmful to youth were not as critical as the youths themselves. The majority (68%) indicated there were no harmful parts of fairs for youths. For those expressing some dissatisfactions, the midway was mentioned most frequently as a harmful influence on youths. The older exhibitors indicated that youths both saw and experienced things on the midway which were harmful, and that many games were not really games of skill but were games of chance. Two examples of such responses are given below:

> "I believe most games on the midway are rigged. Children, whose eyes are not trained to recognize the cheating, lose a lot of money."

> "Did not play midway. By observation you cannot win but useless gadgets."

Another source of dissatisfaction with fairs concerned the sale of beer to minors. Expressions like the following were typically given:

> "The midway should be police patroled to put a stop to teen-age beer drinking."

Some respondents felt that cash premiums were being emphasized too much as a motivation for exhibiting. A relatively few respondents believed that the carnival workers themselves were a harmful influence, and a few others regarded the rides as unsafe.

Being Cheated

In informal interviews conducted during 1970, some exhibitors complained that cheating occurred at fairs on the midway. To determine the extent of perceived cheating, and thus whether some changes might be in order, exhibitors in both classes were asked whether they had been cheated on the midway in 1970. Approximately 15 percent of the Junior-Class exhibitors and 10 percent of Open-Class exhibitors believed that they had been cheated. One Open-Class exhibitor responded that:

> "My sister pulled up a duck with a big number for a big prize & the lady wouldn't let her have it."

A further question about cheating on the midway revealed that most of the alleged cheating took place at the games. This complaint was followed in frequency by complaints dealing with: cheap prizes, rides being too expensive, and the rides being too short, in that order. Open-Class and Junior-Class exhibitors' responses were identical in this regard.

The amounts which respondents claimed they had been cheated out of averaged about $0.90 in the case of the youths, and $1.60 for the older exhibitors.

Most and Least Important Aspects of Fairs

Open-Class exhibitors were also asked what they considered to be the "most important" and "least important" aspects of fairs. Their

responses are shown in Table 6. The exhibits in Junior and Open classes, by far, are viewed as the most important parts of a fair; together these account for 70 percent of the responses. On the other hand, the more recreational aspects of fairs are seen as least important; the midway, refreshment stands and rides together comprise 66 percent of the responses. Commercial exhibits are also seen as contributing little to the importance of fairs.

FAIR ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

State of Wisconsin support for county and district fairs amounts to about $340,000 a year. These funds, derived from State Fair profits, pay the major share of cash premiums at the smaller fairs. Today, with the future of the State Fair in question, an evaluation of this subsidy is timely.

State Subsidy for Fairs

Open-Class exhibitors were asked what changes, if any, should be made regarding the State of Wisconsin subsidy to county and district fairs. The overwhelming response, as shown in Table 7, was that this subsidy should be kept at the current level (68%), if not increased (21%). Only seven percent favored reducing and completely eliminating the subsidy.

Giving Fair Boards Greater Authority

A related question about the subsidy is whether or not these monies should only be used for premiums or if they can be spent more effectively. In line with this, Open-Class exhibitors were asked if fair boards should be given the authority to decide how to spend their subsidies--that is,whether to spend it on premiums, salaries,

Table 6.--Open-Class Exhibitors Responses Regarding the "Most Important" and "Least Important" Aspects of County and District Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

	Most Important		Least Important	
	No.	%	No.	%
Refreshment stands	19	10	32	16
Midway	8	4	74	37
Junior exhibits	86	43	4	2
Open-Class exhibits	60	30	0	0
Commercial exhibits	2	1	40	20
Grandstand show	11	6	13	7
Rides	1	.5	25	13
All	8	4	1	.5
Social aspects	2	1		
Management	1	.5		
Beer stands			1	.5
Junk sales			9	4
TOTAL	198	100	198	100

Table 7.--Distribution of Open-Class Exhibitors Responses Regarding the State Subsidy to County and District Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

Opinions About the Subsidy	No.	%
Eliminated	5	2
Reduced	9	5
Kept at same level	134	68
Increased	42	21
Revised (same at all fairs)	8	4
TOTAL	198	100

judges, buildings, etc. The responses are shown in Table 8. With better than a two-to-one margin, Open-Class exhibitors said that fair boards should be given such authority.

Eliminating the State Subsidy

What might be the effect if the State decides to discontinue its subsidy to county and district fairs? The responses of Open-Class exhibitors, shown in Table 9, suggest the result will likely be fewer entries (52%) and weaker fairs (31%). Generally, the respondents foresee a bleak future for county and district fairs if the subsidy is eliminated.

Fair Consolidation

Not all fairs are equally successful and one remedy suggested for those that are less successful is consolidation. However, while a number of people favor consolidation in an abstract sense, few are willing to see their own fair eliminated through its consolidation with another nearby fair. Few Open-Class exhibitors, as shown in Table 10, favor any fair consolidation; the great majority (82%) are against consolidation.

SUMMARY

This report deals primarily with an evaluation of the educational impact of exhibiting at Wisconsin's county and district fairs. To provide this evaluation, information was collected using mailed questionnaires from 263 Junior-Class and 198 Open-Class exhibitors. The respondents were selected randomly from a listing of all exhibitors at county and district fairs in 1970. Questionnaires were returned by 99 percent and 96 percent of Junior and Open-Class exhibitors,

Table 8.--Open-Class Exhibitors Views on Whether Fair Boards Should be Given the Authority to Decide How to Spend the State Subsidy for County and District Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

Fair boards should be able to decide how to spend State subsidy	No.	%
Yes	124	63
No	61	31
Don't know	5	2
No response	8	4
TOTAL	198	100

Table 9.--Distribution of Open-Class Exhibitors Responses Regarding Possible Effects of Eliminating State Subsidies to County and District Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

Anticipated Effect of Subsidy Elimination	No.	%
Fewer entries	103	52
Weaker fairs	61	31
Smaller attendance	4	2
Don't know	7	3
Little effect	8	4
No response	15	8
TOTAL	198	100

Table 10.--Distribution of Open-Class Exhibitors Responses Regarding Possible Consolidation of Some Fairs, Wisconsin 1970.

Opinions about consolidation	No.	%
Yes	10	5
No	162	82
Undecided	4	2
No response	22	11
TOTAL	198	100

respectively. Data were obtained concerning: (1) social characteristics of exhibitors, (2) exhibiting procedures and attitudes, and (3) changes which might be needed at county and district fairs.

Junior-Class exhibitors were about 13 years of age on the average, and had just finished seventh grade. Two-thirds of them were girls, and 80 percent of them lived in rural areas of the State. More often than not, their fathers were farmers or blue-collar workers.

Open-Class exhibitors averaged about 38 years of age, and had completed 12.4 years of school. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of them were females, and 80 percent of them lived in rural areas; that is, on farms or in the open country but not on farms, or in relatively small villages or towns. Like the Junior exhibitors, the chief income-earner in the Open-Class exhibitors' homes were usually farmers or blue-collar workers.

Most exhibitors (91%) exhibited at one fair only, and spent an average of about 40 hours preparing their exhibits, and planned to exhibit again in 1971. If premiums were not paid in 1971 and ribbons only be given, about 50 percent of the Open-Class and 69 percent of the Junior-Class exhibitors would still exhibit. Most of the exhibits were agricultural or homemaking oriented, and resulted in average earnings of $6.20 for Junior exhibits and $10.26 for Open-Class exhibitors. These earnings did not usually cover their expenditures at the fairs.

Sixty-nine percent of the Junior exhibitors and 54 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors maintained they had learned "much" or "very much" from their exhibiting experience. Junior-Class exhibitors responded that what they had learned was equivalent to about a week and a half of school, on the average. The average Open-Class exhibitors

expressed the opinion that youths learned the equivalent of three weeks of school by exhibiting.

More youthful exhibitors felt that more than anything else their exhibiting experiences were the "best" thing about county and district fairs, and that the commercial entertainment, high prices, judging results, weather, facilities, and the tasks of setting up and taking down their exhibitis were the "worst" things.

Most (68%) of the Open-Class exhibitors felt there was not anything about fairs that was harmful to youths. Most of those who did not agree with this appraisal viewed the midway as being detrimental to youths.

Some indications were given that fair programs ought to be changed so as to make them more appealing to youth. That youths should be involved in determining these programs was suggested frequently.

Most exhibitors were pleased with the judging that takes place at fairs, and with policies permitting exhibiting at more than one fair. However, 15 percent of the youthful exhibitors and 10 percent of the Open-Class exhibitors complained of being cheated at the midway.

Only six percent of these exhibitors had entered an exhibit at the State Fair in 1970, and the majority did not attend it at all. Most (84%) of the Open-Class exhibitors had not attended either Farm Progress Days or an Electric Show. Of those who had attended these events, two-thirds believed the county and district fairs had been most beneficial to them.

IMPLICATIONS

It is quite obvious that exhibiting at county and district fairs fills some vital needs of Wisconsin's people. Important among

these needs are those pertaining to education and social acceptance. If, in fact, the educational value of exhibiting is anywhere close to that which exhibitors think it is, the state is getting a bargain for its investment in the education of approximately 70,000 exhibitors. Moreover, the recognition which the Open-Class exhibitors receive through exhibiting probably serves as a strong reinforcement to them regarding the value of the farmer, the craftsman, and homemaker in our society. This kind of reinforcement is seldom seen in our society, which tends to give its greatest honors to those in other occupations.

While a cause and effect relationship has not been demonstrated in this study and should be considered in future studies, it is entirely possible that exhibiting at county and district fairs has a preventative influence upon delinquency and other deviant behavior by young people. This system of exhibiting, as it exists in Wisconsin and some other states, has some unique characteristics. It covers the entire state, but has a singular attraction for youths living in scattered farms and small hamlets and villages. Increasingly, urban people are becoming involved in exhibiting at county fairs. The rewards of the fair system are based on performance, and though monetarily small, are sufficient to stimulate repeated activity, year after year. The fairs bring thousands of youths and provides them with opportunities for not only meeting and learning from one another, but with small rewards for the products of their labors which are adjudged valuable by society. Thus, with large amounts of monies being spent today on rehabilitative programs, the system of state supported exhibiting at county and district fairs may offer a preventative program at relatively little cost, covering a relatively large number of people not affected by most other kinds of programs.

County and district fairs cannot rest on past accomplishments, however. Changes will be necessary. The following conclusions are tentative, and may be modified or strengthened in subsequent reports, depending upon the results obtained from the remainder of the sample groups in this study:

a. The county and district fair program in Wisconsin should be made even more youth-oriented. This can be done, in part, by involving youth in the planning of fairs.

b. Premium schedules must be flexible and should be updated frequently to encourage more exhibits involving hobby and recreational skills, and other areas of learning relevant to youth. This does not necessarily mean that the number of agricultural and homemaking exhibits should be decreased, or decline in importance.

c. The educational aspects of judging should be improved. Because of problems in scheduling and inadequate space at most fairs, it is unrealistic to expect that all exhibitors be present when judging occurs. However, substitute means should be devised so as to inform exhibitors of specific strengths and weaknesses of their exhibits. For some classes of exhibits this may require additional judges and clerks.

d. Unsafe and unsanitary conditions appear to be a problem at some fairs, and should be eliminated, perhaps by means of state codes which would provide for the withholding of aids from those fairs not complying.

e. Based upon the opinions of exhibitors, the booths and rides of the midway do not appear to represent a major problem. However, Wisconsin should remain a leader in having "clean" midways by reviewing and strengthening existing codes, and by training teams of inspectors to enforce these codes at every fair receiving state aid.

f. Until such time that additional data are available, it is recommended that the State of Wisconsin continue premium subsidies in the same amount as in the past. Subsequent reports will contain recommendations on this question, as well as on issues such as continuation of Open-Class exhibits, premiums--their amount and source, and fair consolidation.

FOOTNOTES

[1]See J. R. Christiansen, H. C. Groot, and D. E. Johnson, Wisconsin County and District Fair Study: Background of the Study, Preliminary Report No. 1, Center for Applied Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1971, pp. 6-7.

[2]Ibid., p. 5.

[3]Follow-up postal cards and letters containing questionnaires were mailed to those persons who did respond to the initial mailing. Most of the unused questionnaires were those of persons who did not exhibit in 1970, and so were listed in error on the master list from which the sample was drawn.

[4]Statistical Abstracts of the U. S.: 1968, p. 113.

[5]Historical Statistics of the U. S., Colonial Times to 1957, Washington, D. C., 1960, p. 9.

[6]Advance Report on 1970 Census of Population in Wisconsin, Department of Administration, State of Wisconsin, 1971, p. 4.

[7]Reynolds Farley, and Albert I. Hermalin. "Family Stability: A Comparison of Trends Between Blacks and Whites," American Sociological Review, Vol. 36, No. 1, February, 1971, p. 6.

[8]1970 Report on Wisconsin County and District Fairs, Wisconsin Exposition Center, Department of Local Affairs and Development, State of Wisconsin, p. 10.

[9]Ibid., p. 18 and p. 26.

[10]Ibid.

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